

THE REPORT

OF THE

MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS

RESPECTING THE

ABORIGINES,

PRESENTED TO THE YEARLY MEETING, 1841.

LONDON :

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1841.

[Tract Relative to the Aborigines, No. 7.]

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THE FOLLOWING TRACTS
ARE PUBLISHED BY THE MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS.

No. 1.—INFORMATION RESPECTING THE ABORIGINES
IN THE BRITISH COLONIES.

No. 2.—EFFECTS OF THE INTRODUCTION OF ARDENT
SPIRITS AND IMPLEMENTS OF WAR
AMONGST THE NATIVES OF THE SOUTH-SEA
ISLANDS AND NEW SOUTH WALES.

No. 3.—FURTHER INFORMATION RESPECTING THE
ABORIGINES; containing Extracts from the Pro-
ceedings of the Meetings for Sufferings in London, and
of the Committee on Indian Affairs; of the Yearly
Meetings at Philadelphia and Baltimore; together with
some particulars relative to the Seminole War.

No. 4.—FACTS RELATIVE TO THE CANADIAN IN-
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No. 5.—REPORT OF THE ABORIGINES COMMITTEE OF
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YEAR 1840; with the Address to Lord John Russell;
that to Friends settling in New Colonies; and some par-
ticulars respecting the state of Aboriginal Tribes.

No. 6.—AN ADDRESS OF CHRISTIAN COUNSEL AND
CAUTION TO EMIGRANTS.

REPORT
FROM THE
MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS
TO THE
YEARLY MEETING
RESPECTING THE
ABORIGINES.

AT a MEETING for SUFFERINGS, held the 11th of the 5th month, 1841.

THE subject of the Aborigines, which was referred by the last Yearly Meeting to the further care of the Meeting for Sufferings, has from time to time continued to obtain the attention both of the Meeting itself, and also of its standing Committee specially appointed to that service.

The Meeting, however, has received fewer communications, and has less variety of details to report to the Yearly Meeting, respecting the state of the uncivilized Aborigines in different parts of the globe, in this, than in some former years. This deficiency is not referable to the diminished claims which this portion of our fellow-creatures presents to our sympathy, but rather to the difficulties which have stood in the way of obtaining information. On various grounds the condition of the aboriginal population in the British Colonies never called for more serious and attentive consideration from the members of our Society than at the present time. Emigration is proceeding with almost unprecedented rapidity, and to districts entirely new. Collisions are frequently occurring between colonists and natives, and under the existing systems they seem to be almost unavoidable; and not only our countrymen at large, but our fellow-members in particular, are deeply interested in putting a stop to atrocities, by which the profession of Christianity is disgraced, and the innocent often become sufferers.

In relation to this subject, the Meeting has thought it right to draw up an Address to Emigrants who may be likely to be brought into relation with uncivilized men. This address has been supplied to several emigrant vessels, and its further distribution is continued under the care of some members of the committee.

The meeting is of opinion that benefit would result from Friends in different parts of the country taking care that a supply of copies of the Address should be placed in the hands of such Friends and others as may be emigrating from their respective neighbourhoods to colonies planted in the vicinity of aboriginal tribes.

No replies have yet been received from friends in Canada to the queries which were last year reported to have been addressed to them, regarding the present state of the Indians residing within the limits, or on the borders of the British provinces, which is probably to be attributed to the fact, that there are no members of our Society living within many miles of the Indian settlements. From accounts received from other sources, it appears that the conversion and instruction of the Chippewa Indians continues to be a subject of serious attention with the members of other religious denominations, although their progress has been somewhat obstructed by different circumstances affecting the state of the provinces, and in some instances by the removal of the Indians, in consequence of the treaty alluded to in former years.

The Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, published at Washington on behalf of the Government, contains the following Letter from Elias Newby, addressed to W. Cummins, the United States Agent for Indian Affairs. It is, however, of old date, being written from the Friends' station, Shawnee nation, 10th of 11th month, 1839.

"RESPECTED FRIEND,—These will inform you that we have had thirteen Shawnee children at school pretty regular, some a little over, and others a little under ten years old, aged as follows:—

"Two about sixteen years old; four about eleven years old; two about nine years old; five under eight years old. None knew all their letters when they commenced, with the exception of two, who could spell a little in two syllables. Now two are beginning to read in the Testament; four spell and pronounce pretty well anywhere in the spelling-book, and pronounce in one or two syllables; four know their letters; two are writing on paper, seven on slates. Their advance in that branch equals anything I ever saw among the whites. The prospect is to continue the school. We teach them the English language. I cannot tell but what the capacity of the Indian is equal to that of white children,—put them under the same embarrassments.

"ELIAS NEWBY."

"Richard W. Cummins."

Though this scanty account is much less encouraging than those which Friends in this country were wont to receive respecting the efforts of their brethren in America, when the Indian settlements had not been removed so far to the west; still we cannot but admire the devotedness of those who are willing to continue their labour of love even in this present remote situation, and amidst increased difficulties in the way of their progress.

In a former year, this Committee reprinted some account of the exertions of Friends in Pennsylvania, to sustain the Seneca Indians in their remonstrance with the general government, against the iniquitous attempts to effect their removal. They have now to report that those efforts have been rendered fruitless, by the presiding officer of the senate having given his casting vote in favour of the removal of the Indians; but as five years are allowed for carrying the measure into execution, hopes are entertained that the change in the administration may produce some mitigation of their doom, as the United States government officially recognises rights on the part of the Indians, and votes considerable sums of money for Indian affairs, though the application of them appears to have been, in some instances, defeated by the conduct of those entrusted with them.

Interesting accounts of many settlements of native Africans within the British dominions in the Cape colony have been laid before Friends, in the published extracts from the journal of our friends, James Backhouse and George Washington Walker. Like their statements regarding the natives of Australia and Van Diemen's Land, they furnish abundant proof that the uncivilised inhabitants of British Colonies have strong claims on our continued sympathy and succour.

This Meeting would, in conclusion, express its hope that Friends in the country will be encouraged to cherish a lively and increasing interest on behalf of the various races of uncivilized men, who are brought into contact with civilized, and especially with British settlers, and that they will freely communicate such information as they may obtain, and such inquiries as they may be desirous of making to the Aborigines Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings, directed to the care of William Manley.

The following Report to the Yearly Meeting at Philadelphia was read at the last Yearly Meeting in London.

*To the Yearly Meeting,
the Committee appointed for the gradual Improvement and Civilization
of Indian Natives, report,*

That in our Report of last year we informed the Yearly Meeting of our apprehension, that the numerous and powerful interests which were combined with the policy of the government in attempting to procure a cession of the remaining portion of the Indian reservations, and the consequent removal of these defenceless people to the westward of the Mississippi, would in all probability be successful.

The pretended treaty of the eighth month, 1838, had been referred to the Senate of the United States, and returned by that body to the President, with authority to make proclamation of the treaty, and carry it into effect whenever he should be satisfied that the assent

of the Seneca tribes of Indians had been obtained, agreeably to the true intent and meaning of the resolution adopted by the Senate in the sixth month, 1838, but no action upon this authority had taken place at the time of our last Yearly Meeting.

The Secretary of War, to whose department the concerns of the Indians are chiefly entrusted, having announced to some members of this Committee his determination to hold a council in person with the Indians at Buffalo, in the seventh month following, and inviting a delegation of our number to be present, it was thought advisable that a visit should be paid to the Indians previously to the expected council. Three friends were accordingly appointed in the fourth month last to visit the Indians at their different reservations; to explain to them the nature of the treaty which was to be offered to their acceptance; to endeavour to ascertain their disposition in respect to emigration, and either to attend the council held by the Secretary of War, or not, as they, upon a careful examination of circumstances, should judge best. The friends thus appointed repaired to the Indian country in the sixth month following. As the Indians of Buffalo possess great influence in the councils of the Seneca nation, and have more frequent intercourse with the officers connected with Indian affairs than the occupants of the other reservations, it was thought eligible to ascertain the sentiments of their chiefs upon the subject of emigration, before proceeding to any other reservation. A council was accordingly held near the end of the sixth month, a few miles from Buffalo, which was attended by about fifty Indians. Friends explained to them what they believed to be the intention of the Government; informed them of the visit to Washington, which was made on their account, the efforts which were used to convince the President and Secretary of War of the injustice inseparable from the ratification of the treaty, and the unfitness of the lands which were offered on the west of the Mississippi for the accommodation and support of the Indians. They also let them know that the President and Secretary distinctly stated that the Indians must be removed from the State of New York, but that the President had declared his intention to submit the treaty once more to the Seneca nation, and try whether any modification of its terms could be made, which would render it acceptable; and that the Secretary of War expressed a willingness to permit a further examination of the lands in the west, in order to find a situation more satisfactory to the Indians. The Indians listened to this address with intense anxiety. In some of them the prospect of being compelled to abandon their present location appeared to produce a feeling of despair, while in others an indignant determination to contend and suffer for their rights was evidently awakened. They unitedly declared that they desired no new examination of the land west of the Mississippi, that they did not expect to find a more desirable location than their present home, from which they were determined not to be removed, except by force; that it was needless to consider the proposal of the Secretary of War, because they did not wish to treat for the sale of

their lands upon any terms whatever. One of them, on behalf of the rest, expressed their thankfulness to Friends for their kindness and assistance, and desired that Friends would continue their attention, even if they should be driven to the west. But he added, that these attempts to remove them were the greatest bars to improvement; that the Indians had no encouragement to make improvements, from which they might be compelled to remove, and leave them for others to enjoy; that they seemed to have no security for their possessions, nor would they have, if removed to the west. That neither President nor Congress could give them any better security for the lands beyond the Mississippi than they had for their present homes. If the white men wanted the land, then another President and Congress would take that from the Indians, as the present ones were doing now.

From the conversation which our friends had with some of the principal Indians on that reservation, it appeared evident that the opposition to emigration had increased since the autumn of the preceding year; and some of them who were then in favour of the treaty had become hostile to it.

A General Council was afterwards convened at Buffalo, on the 5th of seventh month, which, however, the Tonawanta and Oneida chiefs were prevented from attending. This council our friends were invited to attend: there the explanations given at the former council were repeated, and the chiefs appeared all to unite in the sentiments which were expressed in the former.

From Buffalo, Friends proceeded to Tunisassah, where a family of Friends continues to reside, and spent several days on that reservation and its vicinity. They had the satisfaction to believe that the Indians there have not retrograded in regard to industry and sobriety. Many of the chiefs and other influential natives manifest a disposition to discourage the sale and use of ardent spirits. Most of them have small clearings which they cultivate, and the appearance of their crops generally indicated industry and attention. Hence there appeared a reasonable prospect that they would be sufficiently supplied for the ensuing year. But they labour under numerous and complicated difficulties. There are among them some who are too infirm to provide for their own support, and widows with large families, where children are too young to contribute much towards their subsistence. Besides, the flood and frost of 1836 and 1837 have reduced numbers of them to a condition from which they cannot suddenly recover. The loss of their horses and oxen has operated very unfavourably upon their agricultural operations, and promoted the practice of letting out their land to white men to be cultivated. This practice encourages habits of idleness among the Indians, and increases a population on their land, which it is very desirable to keep away. On many parts of the reservation there are white people located, whose principles and morals can scarcely fail to deteriorate the simple natives. The navigable river, which passes through the middle of this reservation, furnishes em-

ployment to boatmen of loose principles, who are likely to diffuse the poison of their example among the native inhabitants, as they pass to and fro. To this may be added the circumstance so feelingly alluded to in the council at Buffalo, that the uncertain tenure by which their possessions are held, and the efforts incessantly making to procure their removal, must operate as a serious discouragement, and greatly counteract any disposition which may be excited among them to cultivate habits of industry and economy, when the fruits of their labours may be soon wrested from them.

In a Council held at Cold Spring, on this reservation on the 12th of seventh month, Friends endeavoured to impress upon the Indians, the importance of establishing habits of greater industry, and of preventing the white people from settling on their lands. This advice appeared to be well received, the chiefs endeavouring to impress it on the minds of the young. The same determined opposition to emigration which had appeared in the council at Buffalo, was manifested at Cold Spring. The two belonging to this reservation, who signed the treaty, are said to be now opposed to it.

Upon deliberate consideration, it was concluded most eligible for the sub-committee not to attend the council which the Secretary of War proposed to hold with the Indians. We have been informed that the council was opened by the Secretary at Cataraugus, on the 12th of eighth month. There the Indians were urged to accede to the terms of the amended treaty, and some endeavours were made to convince them of the advantages to be derived from emigration, and of the liberality of the Government towards them. In reply, fresh proofs were exhibited of the corruption practised in procuring signatures to the treaty, in the form of contracts, securing to the signors sums of from four to six thousand dollars, besides other advantages; and an earnest appeal was made to the Secretary on behalf of the great mass of the nation, that they might be suffered to remain where they are, and prosecute their improvements. They also requested that their annuities, which are greatly in arrear, might be paid. They further offered to ratify a treaty securing to such Indians as chose to emigrate their full share of land and all other national property. The Secretary closed the council by a short speech, in which he advised the Indians to promote harmony and friendship among themselves, to cultivate their land, to build better houses, and to send their children to school. He told them he would communicate to the President the substance of what had passed, and inform them shortly of their conclusion respecting the treaty.

Soon after the opening of the present session of Congress, the President transmitted the treaty to the Senate with information, that, in his opinion, it had not received the assent of the Seneca nation in the manner contemplated and directed by the former resolutions of the Senate; yet, after a long discussion of the subject, that body passed a resolution by the casting vote of the presiding officer, declaring that it had been sufficiently assented to by the Senecas, and advising and recommending that the President proceed to proclaim it, and carry

its provision into effect. It has accordingly been proclaimed, and there is no reason to doubt but it will be executed at the earliest period of which its terms admit, and the Seneca Indians be compelled to abandon their improvements on the reservation to which they have so fondly clung, and seek new homes in the territory assigned them west of the Mississippi.

The depressed condition of these interesting people, and the complicated wrongs which they have suffered, and are suffering, from the more enlightened inhabitants of our common country, present strong claims upon our sympathy and Christian commiseration, and ought to awaken a serious inquiry as to what remains for us to do towards removing or mitigating the evils to which they are exposed.

By an examination of the Treasurer's account, we find that he has in his possession bonds and mortgages to the amount of 5900 dollars, and 837 ⁰⁰/₁₀₀ in cash.

This Committee having been several years under appointment, we suggest to the Yearly Meeting the expediency of a new nomination.

Signed, by direction of the Committee,

THOMAS WISTAR,
CLERK.

Philadelphia,
4 mo. 16, 1840.

The following particulars relating to some of the class of Aborigines, for whom the interest of Friends has been engaged, are added by way of Appendix to the Report, although they were not produced at the Yearly Meeting.

Hesh-ton-a-quet, a Chippewa Indian chief, formerly resident on the Canadian side of the boundary, and who became known to some friends in England, when fraudulently brought here by an adventurer, who designed to make a show of him, has at length been induced to dispose of his reservations, which were partially situated on the American side, and has accepted the offers of the American Government, and removed beyond the Missouri. He has had difficulties to contend with, which are described in the following letter, addressed by him to Sir Augustus d'Este.

*" Osage River, west of Mississippi,
April 26, 1841.*

" Sir Augustus d'Este,

" MY BROTHER,—I was very happy to find in Westport, a few days ago, a letter from my friend Thomas Hodgkin. I rejoice to

hear that your life and health is continued, as well as that of my friend Hodgkin. For two nights I could not sleep; I felt when I looked at the letter, that I could almost see you both. I, too, am much blessed; my health is good, but I am constantly sick in my heart on account of the recent death of my eldest son. I feel that the Creator of all things has taken him from me; so I am compelled to think it is all for the best. That which is contained in the letter is true; I was certainly foolish to sell off my land, and come to this place. If the Americans had not cheated me, I would not have come here, but they bought my lands, and then would not pay me until I removed to this place; so it was not my wish to come here, but it was your own kind of people, the whiteskins. I was told that if I did not come here, I should not have any money, but if I should come here I could have a great deal. I accordingly came, but still do not get paid. I have just spent all that my friends in England gave me, and I am now poor; I did not make myself poor, but the Americans did it. That which you say, is probably true, that the government does not cheat me, but some of its servants. I was promised when leaving my old home for this place, that, on my arrival here, we should be furnished with eight yoke of oxen, and all kinds of farming utensils, but although we have been here two winters, we have not received, as yet, anything of the kind. I have just now returned from Westport, sixty miles distant, where I purchased for our use one yoke of oxen, twenty hoes, and a plough; I have also bought cows, hogs, &c. I am pleased with this country; the land is good, and the climate pleasant, but I am afraid that the U. S. will continue as they have begun—to cheat me. Probably, when I get improvements made here, the white man will again take it from me. I sometimes think that if I had removed into Canada, I should have been better off. The time is probably not far when they shall want me to plough with my foot, and use hands instead of the hoe. Since we came here, we have received but six hundred dollars of my old debt, which they owed my father. I remember that in Canada, your people always gave much to the Indians, and that when your people promised anything we were sure to receive what was promised. But here it is not so. We were promised that on our arrival here we should be fed, but we were here two months before we received anything, and we were compelled to run in debt for our food. So many failures make me think that we shall at last be cheated more and more. During the winter before last, we worked hard to clear off large fields. I sold a horse to get seeds, expecting that we should get our oxen as we were promised, but have never got any till I just now bought one yoke. The hope that we should get the oxen, &c. stimulated us to work hard; I brought with me goods to last me for several years.

I then sold all off, to enable me to enclose and cultivate a large farm, hoping that with my money which I was to receive, I could get goods for clothing again. Our clothing is given out; we have no money, and we are indeed poor. The white man comes from the Atlantic, and says to us, Go a little further. As soon as we are set-

tled, we hear the command again, Go a little further. When I last sold my land, I was promised, by treaty, that I should have a deed for my land here; but I cannot get it. I shall probably soon hear the same old command, Go a little further; this is what discourages and alarms me. In your last letter, you still show symptoms of great friendship; you encourage me much by promising to help us. I put my trust in you. I still feel that my English father has not forsaken me yet; I shall still hope for help from you. Your letter encourages me to look for another; I therefore shall now wait to know what help is coming, and shall gladly accept of whatever your liberality shall bestow upon us. I have told my people what you say to me, which causes them all to rejoice. If our Great Father shall pity me, and spare my life and health, I design within three or four years from this time, having provided a comfortable home for my family, to visit all of my friends in London. I assure you that I feel extremely anxious to see you all again. I shake your hands, my dear friends, d'Este and Hodgkin. I am, as ever,

Your sincere friend,

HESH-TON-A-QUET.

Direct your letter to me, the care of Jothan Meeker, Westport, Jackson's County, Missouri.

It is gratifying to believe that his difficulties are likely to be removed, and that he will probably prove a useful neighbour to other Indians, likewise sent to that quarter. The following paragraph is extracted from a letter written by a gentleman connected with the Government at Washington:—"I learn through Mr. M'Coy, the missionary that Hesh-ton-a-quet lives in his neighbourhood; that he is a very worthy Indian, is doing very well, and his removal would be a great loss and a serious injury to other Indians, as they would be deprived of his good example. His band consists of between fifty and one hundred persons, and they have thirteen square miles, or 8,320 acres of excellent land. There was a bill before Congress to pay them their emigration expenses, but I am inclined to the opinion that it was not acted on, for want of time. It will probably be carried through at the extra session, which is to take place on the 31st of May."

The Seminole Indians.

The war between the United States and the Seminole Indians has not yet terminated; but numbers of these unhappy people, finding further resistance useless, are submitting in small companies to the will of the American Government, and are to be sent to the far-west. There is now in this country a very interesting Seminole lad of about eleven years of age. He is a remarkably well disposed and intelligent child, and it is hoped that his education in this country

may, if suitably directed, be of essential service to his countrymen. He is the nephew of the chief Oceola, who died a prisoner in the United States.

Aborigines of Australia.

Launcelot Threlkeld, the conductor of a mission to the Aborigines in the neighbourhood of Lake Macquarie, in his annual report, published in the beginning of this year, gives some interesting particulars respecting these people, which tend to prove the great practical evil which results from the inadmissibility of their evidence in criminal cases. The ends of justice are thereby frustrated, whether they suffer from the hands of a colonist, or from violence committed by other natives. This deficiency has been the subject of repeated remonstrance in the interviews which Friends have had at the Colonial office, and it was believed that in Australia at least a remedy would be applied, yet it is stated in Threlkeld's report, after giving the particulars of certain murders which had been committed, "Since the transactions related took place, the Royal 'disallowance' of the act to allow the Aborigines of New South Wales to be received as competent witnesses in criminal cases has been gazetted, and thus leaves them without any hope of redress, exposed to the violence of any one, excepting proof can be obtained from white witnesses, which is most easily avoided in this colony. I had apprised them of the expected piece of justice to the Aborigines. I am now perfectly at a loss to describe to them their position. Christian laws will hang the Aborigines for violence done to Christians, but Christian laws will not protect them from the aggressions of nominal Christians, because Aborigines must give evidence only upon oath [which it is pretended that they are not sufficiently enlightened to be allowed to take]. The cases mentioned show the pitiable state in which the Aborigines are abandoned by the disallowance of their evidence; nor can the small remnant of the tribes long exist to call forth sympathy, even were they to enjoy every protection of British law, unless some fostering arm be stretched out, some special Providence intervene to rescue them from ruin." Launcelot Threlkeld, who it may be observed became acquainted with our friend Daniel Wheeler when he visited Australia, states facts in another part of the report, which prove that these Aborigines are not incapable of acquiring the manners of civilized life. "Some of them gain employment as carriers, messengers, and servants, and others going on board numerous vessels which frequent the coast. At Twofold Bay there are two whale-boats entirely manned by Aborigines; one of the boats took five whales in one season, the other three. The men live in huts with their families, and cook their own provisions, the same as white people. Some of these women are good washerwomen, and one or two have made gowns for themselves."